



Washington State Liquor Control Board

May 30, 2012

Statement of Board Chair Sharon Foster regarding the City of Seattle's petition to open rule-making on WAC 314-11-070

I am voting today to deny the City of Seattle's request to open rule-making on WAC 314-11-070, which would have started a process for allowing a city to petition the Board for exceptions to the 2:00 a.m. deadline for alcohol sales.

Statewide Perspective

The Board took the city of Seattle's petition very seriously. Because of our statewide perspective, we held four public hearings around the state and reached out to wide variety of citizens, nightlife advocates, city officials, law enforcement and the prevention community. With the exception of Spokane, where the input was overwhelmingly opposed, comments from those in attendance were generally mixed. However, one common theme, and one that influenced my decision the most, was that a city's ability to control public safety ends at its borders. We heard this theme from citizens, law enforcement and city officials outside of the city of Seattle. The concern: "what happens when people migrate from neighboring cities to drive in and out of a city with extended hours or 24-hour alcohol service?"

Opposing Organizations

Some organizations that contacted the Board to oppose include:

- Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
- S.E. Seattle Crime Prevention Council
- All Precinct Advisory Councils
- Central Seattle Drug Free Communities Coalition
- Pioneer Business Owners
- Belltown Business Owners & Residences
- Ballard Business Owners & Residences
- The Downtown District Council
- #59 Belltown Action Neighborhood
- Island County Sheriff
- Chelan County Sheriff
- Columbia County Sheriff
- Whatcom County Sheriff
- Anacortes Police Dept.
- Vancouver Police Dept.
- Battleground Police Dept.
- Federal Way Police Dept.
- Pullman Police Dept.
- City of Spokane
- Spokane Police Depart.
- City of Federal Way
- EMS of Thurston County

Contrary to Mission

We are the Liquor Control Board. Our paramount responsibility is public safety, and I believe control plays a major part of public safety. Some research that we collected shows that extended hours can have a negative impact on public safety. For example, of the 19 most reliable studies in the international literature, 16 out of 19 (84%) indicate adverse impacts of extended alcohol sales hours. Norway shows that for each additional extension of operating hours, there is a 16 percent increase in violent crime.

Additional Availability

I am also concerned that extending hours of alcohol sales at the same time that outlets selling liquor increasing dramatically may have an adverse effect on public safety. On June 1, the availability of liquor will increase approximately five fold. We are going from 328 outlets selling liquor now to more than 1,500. We don't yet know the public safety impact this will have in Washington, but the research is clear that increasing outlets negatively affects public safety. On- and off-premises licensees have the same hours today. It seems likely that off-premises locations, such as retailers, would soon ask for the same 24/7 privilege.

Over-Service

Our own LCB enforcement division tells us they do not have the resources to deal with extended hours and Seattle has not indicated they have additional money. The ratio of liquor enforcement officers to licensees statewide is 1:300. In Seattle, it is 1:400. If 2:00 a.m. is a dangerous push-out time, maybe we should consider that the cut-off isn't really the problem. Instead, if bars and nightclubs are pushing intoxicated people out the door at 2:00 a.m., is over-serving the real problem?

While my vote is to deny the city of Seattle's petition, city officials may always take the issue to the Legislature.

###